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REMARKS

An Office Action was mailed on May 23, 2006.

Claims 1 and 3-20 are pending, of which claims 1, 14, and 20 are the only independent claims.

By the foregoing, independent claims 1 and 14 are amended. Claim 20 is cancelled. Entry of all claim amendments is requested. No new matter is being introduced and all claims are well supported by the specification. Passage of all claims to allowance is earnestly solicited.

Claims 1, 3-5, 8, 12-16, and 18 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,794,013 to Iacovelli et al. (Iacovelli). Dependent claims 6, 7 and 17 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Iacovelli in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,743,210 to Lampe (Lampe). Dependent claims 9-11 and 19 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Iacovelli.

The present invention is a pet mat configured to prevent a food or water bowl from sliding on the top surface of the pet mat.

The Examiner asserts that a broad reading of "contiguous" in the limitation of "a contiguous field" (claims 1 and 14) to be adjacent or neighboring. Applicant respectfully suggests that this is clearly grammatically erroneous. While "contiguous fields", i.e. plural, may read on the Examiner's assertion, the singular of "a contiguous field," respectfully, does not for at least the reasons of the grammatical syntax and structure of the sentence.

Applicant respectfully suggest that the proper definition of "contiguous" is "*connecting without a break: the 48 contiguous states*" (The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition Copyright © 2004, 2000 by Houghton Mifflin Company.).

Notwithstanding the above, Applicant has now amended claims 1 and 14 to recite "a common field." These same claim, now recite

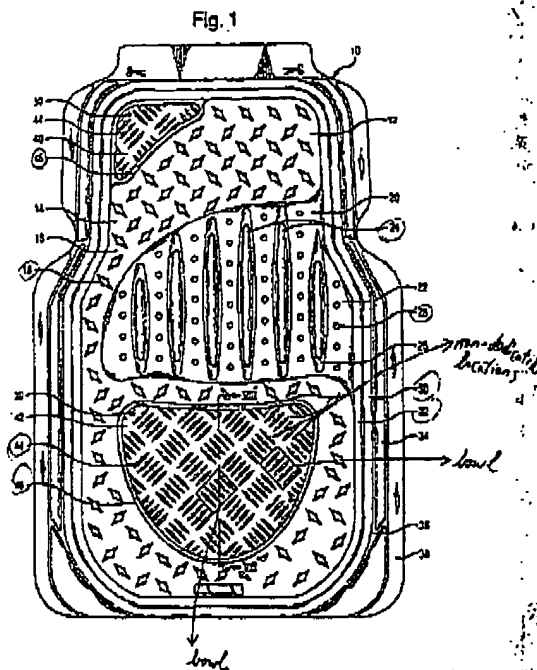
"a plurality of raised bumps arranged . . . in an irregular, asymmetric pattern" and that

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"said plurality of bumps are sized and spaced such that when a pet bowl is placed anywhere in the field, the bowl normally falls within interstices of the bumps and is restrained by said bumps in a plurality of non-dedicated locations."

As noted previously, the bumps are arranged in a common field on the upper surface where the bumps have a structure that is pattern.. The pattern is defined as being sized and spaced such that when the bowl is placed anywhere in the field, the bowl normally falls within interstices of the bumps and is restrained by said bumps in a plurality of non-dedicated locations.

Iacovelli does not teach, disclose, or suggest the claimed structure. The Examiner finds that placement of bowls of rather unusual shapes are possible on the vehicle floor mat taught by Iacovelli. The Examiner helpfully provides the following image indicating two placement locations of a bowl.

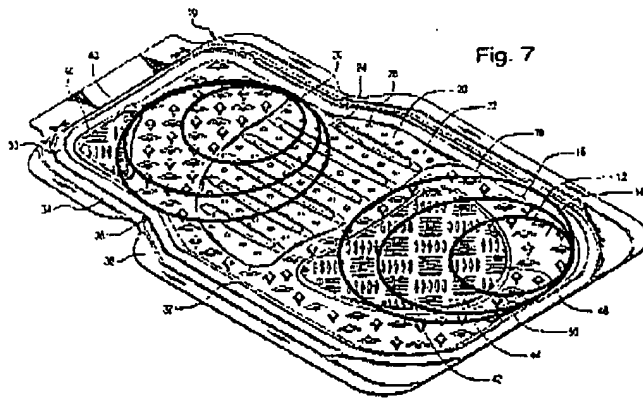


Applicant indeed agrees it is possible to place bowls on the mat of Iacovelli, but Iacovelli fails to teach structure that allows placement of a pet bowl, or for that matter, a bowl at anywhere in the field of bumps. Rather, as the Examiner's drawing clearly shows, the location for the bowl

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placement must be carefully chosen to accommodate a placement that restrains the bowl as claimed. A random placement on the upper surface of the mat is not possible. Instead, a careful selection is required. Applicant respectfully submits that even if the entire mat of Iacovelli were provided with the ridges of the heel plate where the Examiner has placed the rectangular bowls, careful placement selection is required – and it is required because Iacovelli fails to teach, disclose, or suggest the claimed structure of bumps and of the pattern of bumps.

Indeed, Applicant in a prior Response pointed out this specific difficulty with the alleged teaching of Iacovelli and provided the below drawing. Therein, the bowl placements made by the Applicant clearly show that the bowl would sit on top of the ridges taught by Iacovelli and not be restrained by the pet mat as required by claims 1 and 14.



The Examiner asserts that the limitation "*that when a pet bowl is placed anywhere in the field*" is an intended use and fails to serve to patentably distinguish the claimed structure. Applicant respectfully submits that this is legal error.

The limitation in fact is the structure of the size and spacings of the bumps. Therein, the "*plurality of bumps are sized and spaced such that when a pet bowl is placed anywhere in the field, the bowl normally falls within interstices of the bumps*". In other words, the inventive aspect of the mat is, at least in part, that the bumps have a particular type of pattern, say pattern types X, of size and spacing that is defined by certain dimensions and distances to restrain a pet bowl. Other types of patterns than pattern types X would not work.

If, for example, pattern type X were a dimension of a handle, one could define the handle as being in "*a range from 2 cm to 3 cm*" and clearly such a range would not be intended usage. The same applies to Applicant's pattern of bumps, pattern types X. A range of patterns of bumps are sized and spaced in a particular and novel way. Accordingly, the Examiner is respectfully to reconsider the rejection and is further requested to withdraw the rejection with respect to Iacovelli for this reason alone.

Notwithstanding the above, the selection of the area by the Examiner, namely area 42, fails to teach the claimed limitation in claims 1 and 14. Therein, "*a plurality of raised bumps [are] arranged . . . in an irregular, asymmetric pattern.*" The pattern of ridges in the prior art used by the Examiner to illustrate bowl placement clearly is regular and symmetric. Accordingly, the Examiner is respectfully requested to withdraw the rejection under Iacovelli for this reason alone.

The missing teachings are not filled by Lampe. Lampe teaches pet food dish with an insert held by side walls. Therein, Lampe fails to teach, disclose, or suggest any of the claimed structure and in particular the claimed arrangement of bumps to restrain a bowl in a plurality of non-dedicated locations.

To bring the present invention to grant, Applicant offers new claim 21. Support thereof may be found in claims 1 et al. as filed as well as the specification as a whole and in particular at pg. 2, line 22 to pg. 3, line 7. Passage of the claim to allowance is requested.

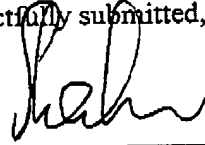
The Examiner is accordingly respectfully requested to withdraw all rejections for the reasons given individually and cumulatively.

All dependent claims are allowable for at least the same reasons as the independent claims from which they depend.

An earnest effort has been made to be fully responsive to the Examiner's objections. Passage of this case to allowance is earnestly solicited. However, if for any reason the Examiner should consider this application not to be in condition for allowance, he is respectfully requested to telephone the undersigned attorney at the number listed below prior to issuing a further Action.

Any fee due with this paper, including any extension fee necessary, may be charged on Deposit Account 50-1290.

Respectfully submitted,



Hassan A. Shakir
Reg. No. 53,922
(212) 940-6489

CUSTOMER NO.: 026304

ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.: JWIL 20.354 (100668-00107)